



GA.09 13/14
Committee Governance and Audit
27 June 2013

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Subject: Summary of Feedback (Compliments, Comments and Complaints) 2012/13

Report by:

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Purpose / Summary:

To review the number, type and results of complaints, comments and compliments made to the Council during 2012/13 and advise members about the work being undertaken to deliver the Customer Experience Strategy

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Members note the 2012/13 results and where appropriate suggest corrective action

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:
None arising from this report.

Financial :
None arising from this report.

Staffing :
None arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :
*NB: A full impact assessment **HAS TO BE** attached if the report relates to any new or revised policy or revision to service delivery/introduction of new services.*

Risk Assessment :
None arising from this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :
None arising from this report.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:
None

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

Yes

No

Key Decision:

Yes

No

1. Introduction

1.1 In March 2008 the Corporate Governance Group agreed to submit an annual report to this Committee on Complaints.

1.2 Customers are at the heart of what we do and we need to ensure that our services meet the needs of the customer in terms of:

- Ensuring our services is customer led and designed in collaboration with customers
- That they are accessible to all who want to use them and that we offer a variety of channels through which customers can access our services
- That the outcomes of the services we provide deliver the outcomes customers need

1.3 The customer first program, approved November 2010, aims to deliver Customer Led Services, Effective Appropriate Access for all delivering better outcomes.

1.4 To make this program a reality a Customer Experience Strategy has been developed which will:

- Improved access to public sector services for all by providing fully transactional services via the website and other electronic means.
- Improve services to customers by learning from all types of customer feedback.
- Will provide customer led services, co-designed by empowering customers and sharing all relevant information.
- Will identify service failure
- Information about our customers will be used to inform our decisions about service offerings, current and future delivery and investments.
- We will use information about demand to understand customer requirements
- Challenge and monitor the in-depth reviews to ensure customer focus adequate
- Poor customer behaviour by staff will be challenged and we will reward and recognise good customer behaviour by staff

The strategy will be monitored via the Entrepreneurial Board receiving regular updates

A programme is being put together for six key areas below and work is underway to identify how these areas will be progressed. An initial workshop was held on the 20 May 2012 with partners from NE lincs to gain some insight to the work this Council undertook.

● Increase self-serve

- Better Customer satisfaction.
- Reduce Failure.
- One Stop Resolution.
- Customer Insight
- Increase prevention demand.

1.5 A Customer focus group consisting of Councillors Howitt-Cowan and Welburn, Mark Sturgess, Emma Redwood, Alan Robinson and Lyn Marlow have met regularly and have put in place a number of initiatives.

The group no longer meets as members felt we did not need to continue to meet, other alternatives means of regular communication are in place and the work of this group continues. It is envisaged that once the framework around the six key areas identified above has been firmed up then a meeting will be arranged in order to discuss how we will achieve the aim and objectives identified.

2. Background

2.1 Complaints are recorded by the Customer Services team and are dealt with in accordance with the Council's Complaints Comments and Compliments procedure.

3. Analysis of Complaints for 2012/13

- 3.1 A total of 133 complaints were received in 2012/2013 a reduction of 71 from 2011/12.
- 3.2 This is despite a general increase in demand for some services due to the recession and customers finding themselves in increasingly difficult situations.
- 3.3 This reduction demonstrates that the "organising for delivery" restructure is enabling officers to work together with a joined-up approach to dealing with customer issues.
- 3.4 The work undertaken by the Customer Focus group has had an impact in terms of awareness rising among members and members are now seeking help and advice from officers quicker which helps prevent enquiries escalating into formal complaints.
- 3.4 The 6 main areas for complaints are Development Management including, Building Control and Local Land Charges (33), Operational Services (41), Housing including Enforcement (23), Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services (18), Housing (11) Corporate Governance (5) and Public protection (2) (see appendix A and B)
- 3.5 **Development Management** – There were a total of 33 complaints received for this service during 2012/2013. The majority of issues related to matters around planning consent, delays in land charges, how customers were dealt with by staff, lack of information on website and at planning committee. It also need to be noted that there has

- been a reduction of 14 complaints on the 2011/12 figures for this area. That being said enforcement matters, which are controversial, are now dealt with in the Housing team. This needs to be put into context that we successfully granted 1291 planning applications in 2012/2013.
- 3.6 **Operational Services** – There were 41 complaints received for this service in 2012/2013 – a reduction of 11 complaints since 2011/2012. The majority of issues were in relation to missed bins of which five customers were repeatedly missed and three customers are part of the assisted bin service, there was a small number (5) complaints about the changes to the bulky collections and charging for new bins and we are still receiving complaints about the green bin winter collection suspension. This has to be set in context that operational services visit 41,329 properties on a weekly basis to collect some form of waste from these properties and this does not include additional service such as bulky waste or sharps collections.
- 3.7 **Housing Services including Enforcement** There were 23 complaints for these services in 2012/2013. This represents a reduction of 8, it should be noted that enforcement complaints are now part of this area. The majority of complaints (12) were in relation to enforcement issues with rest relating to waiting list and new allocations system, Neighbour disputes, regarding work carried out by WLDC to properties and the administration of Disabled Facilities Grant.
- 3.8 **Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services** – There were 18 complaints for these services for 2012/2013, the same as 2011/2012. The issues related to conduct of staff, procedures and lack of response/action. Given the current economic climate it is a credit to the staff who work in these areas and deal with a vast numbers of customers on a daily basis, who are suffering much financial hardship, that so few complaints have been made.
- 3.9 **Corporate Governance** – There were 5 complaints for this service in 2012/13. In 2011/2012 no complaints were received at all. Of the five complaints three were in relation to the website of – 2 of these about problems with emails alerts in respect of explosive testing at Faldingworth and a further complaint about wording on council tax pages.
- 3.10 **Public Protection** - There were 2 complaints for these services for 2012/2013. This represents an decrease of 16 from 2011/2012 It should be noted that issues around armaments testing at Faldingworth Defence Ltd have not ceased it is that local residents are taking a different approach to the issues of testing.
4. **Local Government Ombudsman**
- 4.1 There were a total of 4 LGO complaints received in 2012/13 compared with 9 in 2011/12 so a reduction of 5.
- 4.2 Of the 4 enquiries 1 was in relation to a financial breach of procedure where the LGO decided not to investigate and recorded this as no personal injustice, 1 was in relation to enforcement and the LGO felt that the complaint should not be perused further, 1 was in relation to the inaccuracy of Land Charges search and this complaint is still on-going and 1 was in relation to collection of council tax and was returned to the Council as it has not been investigated under our procedures and was therefore logged by LGO as a premature complaint.

4.4 In last year's report we reported that our average days to respond was 20 days and at the point of writing this report we do not have any information from the LGO on 2012/13 performance. .

5. **Complaints system**

5.1 As reported last year, Corporate Governance team which incorporates Business Transformation is working on migrating the complaints monitoring system to Minerva. Unfortunately due to conflicting priorities this is still work in progress but it is anticipated that this issue will be resolved over the next few months.

6. **Compliments**

6.1 In addition to complaints we capture compliments and comments. These are show in Appendix C with a flavour of the types of compliments and comments we receive in Appendix D

7 **You said we did**

7.1 During the year we have captured learning from some complaints and these are shown below. See Appendix E for details for

8. **Self-Serve**

8.1 In September 2012, we began prioritising promoting self serve options, demonstrating these to customers wherever possible, either by face to face interactions, or simply talking through our website to customers over the phone to allow them to follow along with our guidance. This will encourage future use of the website for subsequent enquiries where possible. 170 demonstrations have been carried out between Sept 2012 and end March 2013 and has been well received by customers.

9. **Conclusion**

9.1 This report sets out comprehensive information on complaints which have and will continue to be used to improve services. It was planned that during 2012/2013 all staff would undertake training in relation to customer care with Team Managers receiving specific training in relation to complaint management with a view to improving our services and reducing the number of complaints received.

9.2 Unfortunately this training has not been delivered due to conflicting priorities and delays in migrating the complaints system over to Minerva. Whilst customer care training is important is it difficult to commit at this stage that this training will commence in 2013/2014 as we are currently working on identification of customer strategy priorities for 2013/2014 in light of the need to save £3 million over the next 3 years.

9.3 Complaints are not negative and should be seen as a way to positively make improvements but complaints can use a lot of resources in terms of officer time so it make sense to spend time drawing down any learning from complaints and to proactively work to reduce the amount of complaints received..

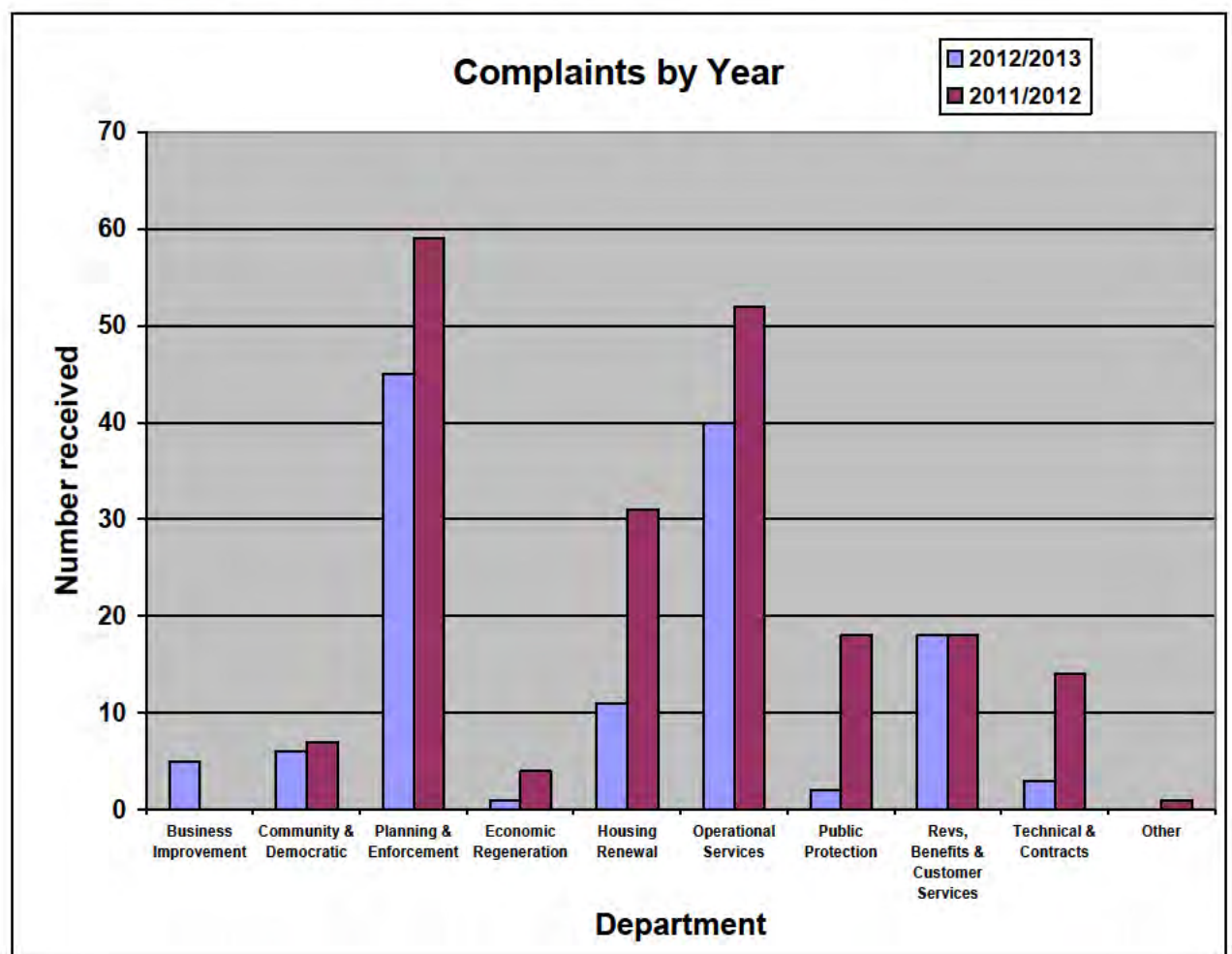
9.4 As can be seen by this report we have successfully reduced the number of complaints down by 71 complaints and 5 LGO complaints

during 2012/2013. It is envisaged that via training and a more hands on approach we can work to reducing this event further.

- 9.5 In these difficult and challenging times when customers demand more from local councils and yet we have less and less money to help deliver services it is a credit to officers that we have been able to work towards achieving this reduction.

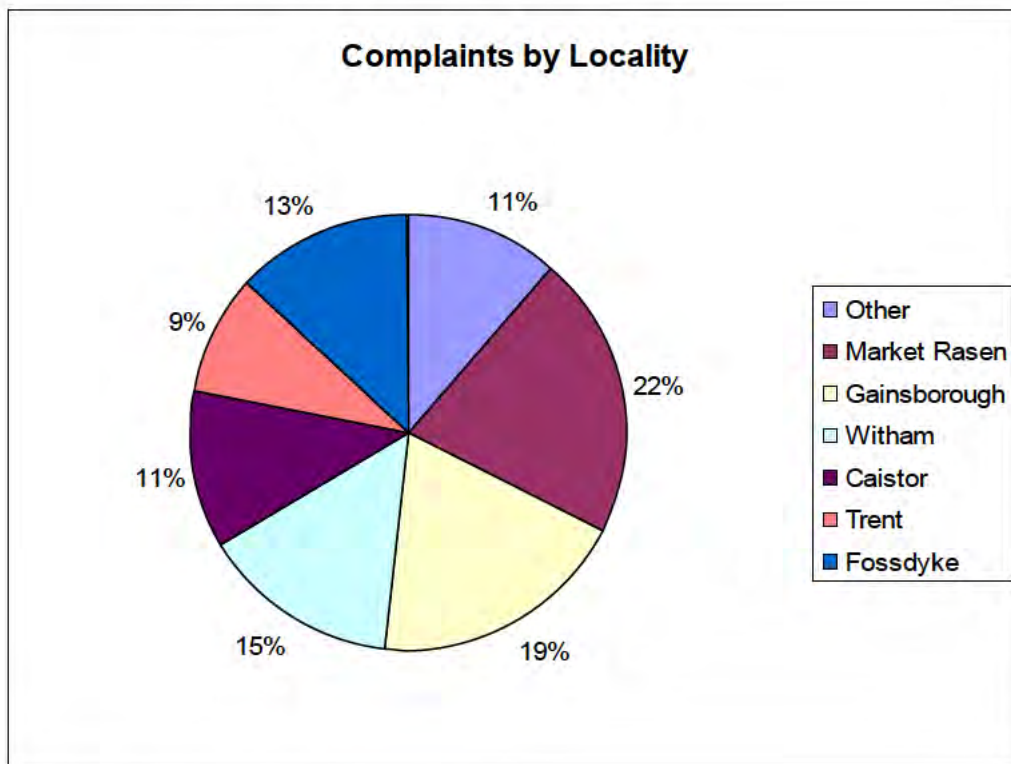
Appendix A

Complaints by years 2011/2012 and 2012/2013

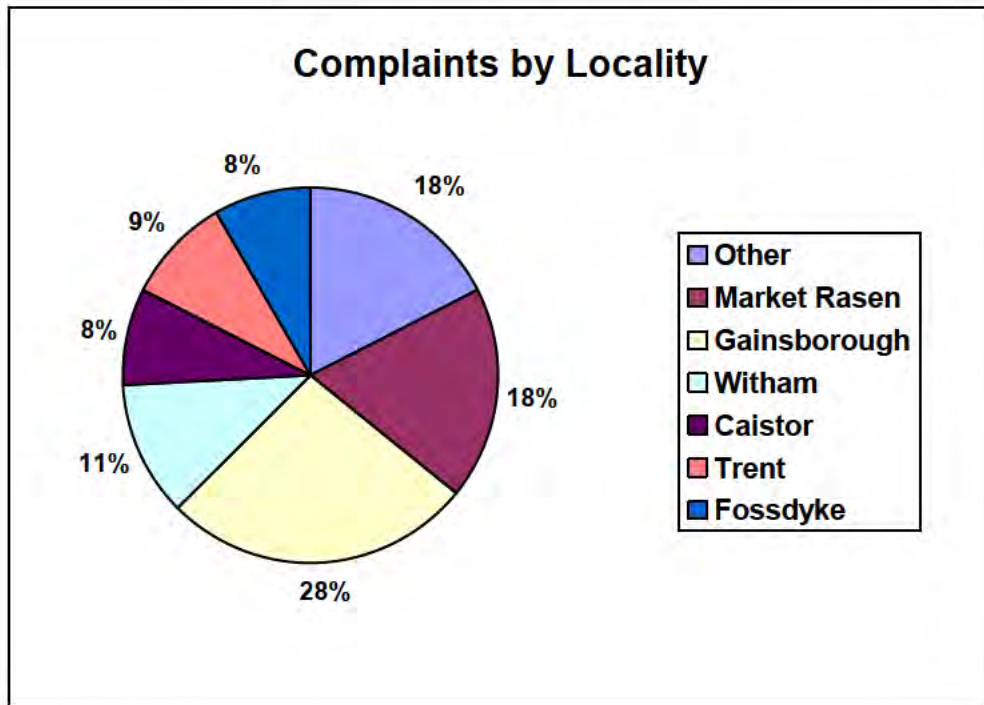


Appendix B

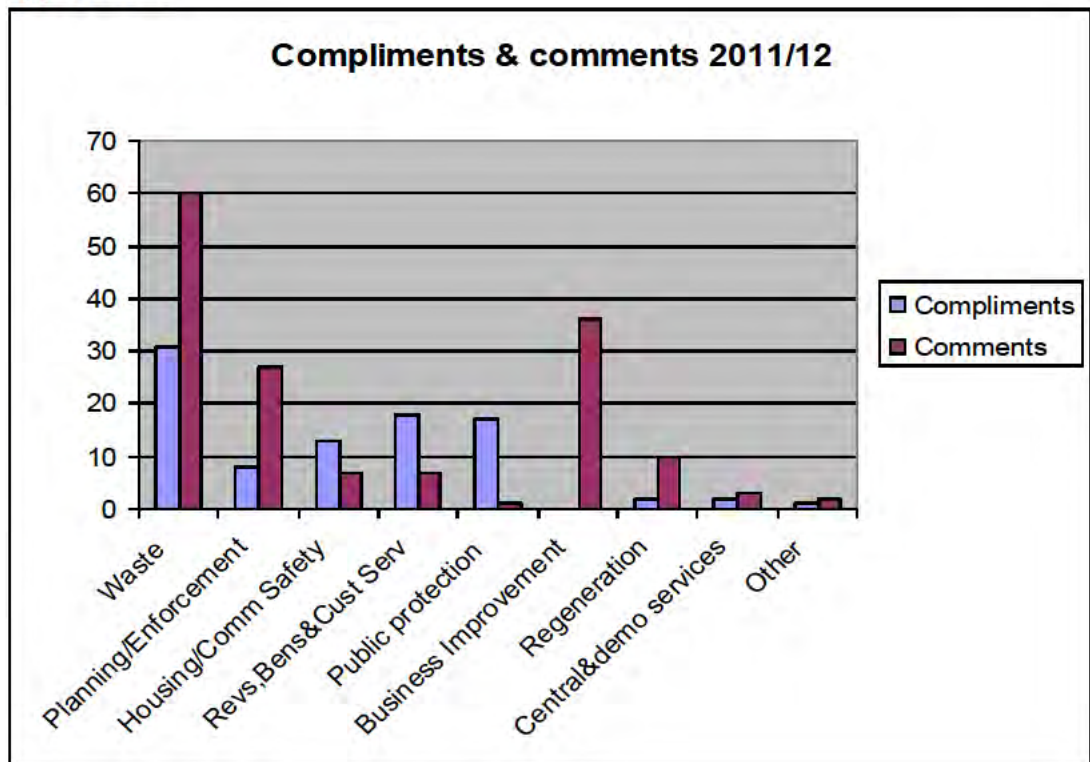
Complaints by Locality 2011/2012



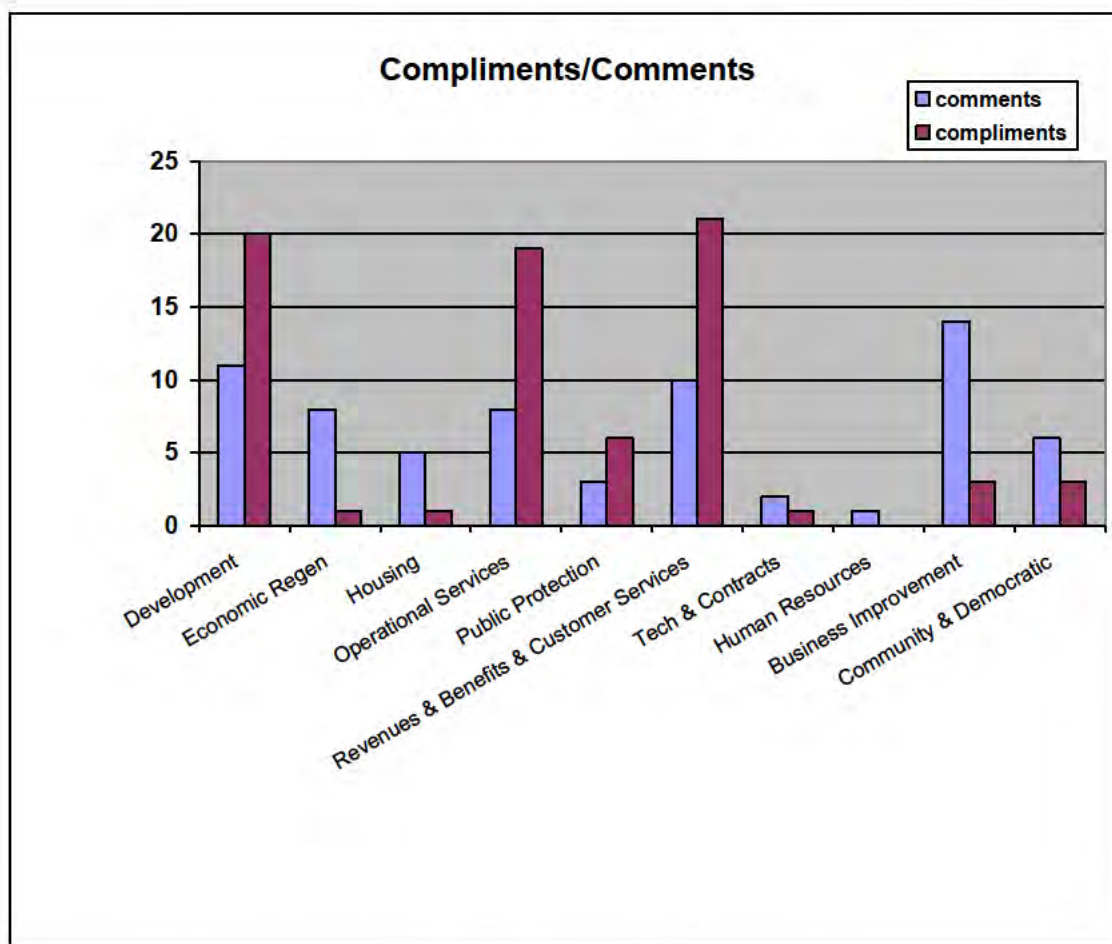
Complaints by Locality 2012/2013



Appendix C



Compliments and Comments 2012/2013



Appendix D – Selection of Compliments and Comments

Compliments	
Housing	Thanks to Paula Clarke & Michelle Howard for their help, politeness & efficiency assisting him with tenants at his affordable housing development
Neighbourhoods & Health	Customer called to say thank you for coming this morning and clearing up the alley way
Customer Services	Lady thinks that Customer Services Team are the best ever. Always are able to deal with her enquiries and are always helpful & knowledgeable
Strategy & Regeneration	Compliment to Heather Kelly for everything that she is doing for a customer
Neighbourhoods & Health	customer called to saying what a fantastic job waste services had done to clear mess/general rubbish etc dumped in alley near to Heaton Street
Neighbourhoods & Health	Thanks to Jackie Brown from a customer for 'all you do for the Health Walkers, I really enjoy walking with the group'

Resources	Thank you for the excellent service provided by Kate Barley
Resources	Well done to Alan Robinson on the consitution paper, terrific Job
Resources	Thanks to West Lindsey for excellent work carried out by cleaning verges of A1173.
Neighbourhoods & Health	Thanking the team for clearing up the fly tipping in Laughton. Said that they have done a cracking job and to keep up the good work

Comments	
Customer Services	Would like to express gratitude regarding the new Amenities in Market Rasen, The facilities are Very helpful and the staff are very polite
Operational Services	Very Useful, especially for paying bills and finding out about rubbish collections
Planning	Website was helpful for finding the conditions of discharging forms
Website	Website is a very good source of information Used for recyding, Planning and council meetings
All (General)	Pleased with all the features within the council
Operational/Customer	Thanks to the teams regarding the West Lindsey District Council bin calendars
Council Tax	Specific Information given regarding council tax was very helpful
Council Tax	Payment system is very good

Appendix E You said – we did examples...

Dept	You said	We did/Will
All	Staff attitude/conduct/lack of response	Customer Care training to be implemented for ALL staff during 2013/2014. Attendance is compulsory
Planning	Unhappy that not able to access plans on the website	Work is continuing on ensuring that all relevant plans are available on website
Council Tax	Wording on website is misleading	Changes made to wording
Operational Services	Repeated missed bins	Notes made on FLARE that repeated missed bins are escalated to Customer Strategy and Service Manager for action.
Public Protection	Alert system not working	Amendment to way the

		alert system is managed put in place.
Enforcement	Incorrect telephone number advertised on website for contacting enforcement team.	Website amended
Customer Services	Unable to deal with enquiry in respect of green bins as customer services do not have access to debtors system	Access to Debtors system given to Customer Services so can deal with green bin invoice enquiries at first point of contact